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# A CLASS OF MULTIPLE-ERROR-CORRECTING CODES AND THE DECODING SCHEME

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IRVING S. REED

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AND THE DECODING SCHEME

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ABSTRACT

A procedure for constructing one-error-correcting and two-error-detecting systematic codes has been introduced by R. W. Hamming. Some examples of  $n$ -error-correcting and  $(n+1)$  error-detecting systematic codes for the cases where both the code length and  $n+1$  are powers of two are presented. The decoding scheme presented in this report differs from Hamming's scheme in that the encoded message will be extracted directly from the possibly corrupted received code by a majority testing of the redundant relations within the code. The general multinomial expansion formula for a Boolean function is discussed. A theorem about the relations satisfied by the highest or  $r$ -th degree coefficient of any vector or polynomial of a defined submodule of a particular Boolean ring is proved, and forms the basis for the general decoding principle.

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## A CLASS OF MULTIPLE-ERROR-CORRECTING CODES AND THE DECODING SCHEME

### I. INTRODUCTION

A procedure for constructing one-error-correcting and two-error-detecting systematic codes was introduced in a recent study by R. W. Hamming.<sup>1</sup> It is the purpose of this report to exhibit some examples of  $n$ -error-correcting and  $(n + 1)$  error-detecting systematic codes for the cases where both the code length and  $(n + 1)$  are powers of two. The class of codes to be considered was developed by D. E. Muller in his recent work.<sup>2</sup>

The decoding scheme presented in this report differs from Hamming's scheme in that the encoded message will be extracted directly from the possibly corrupted received code by a majority testing of the redundant relations within the code. Hamming's scheme for  $n = 1$  was dependent first on the location of a possible digit error in the code; secondly, on the correction of that digit; and lastly, on the extraction of the message from the corrected code. By circumventing Hamming's step of error location and correction, which is quite a severe problem when  $n$  is not equal to one, we have arrived at a decoding scheme that makes a natural use of the redundancy within the code as well as being conceptually simple and practical to implement.

In this report, some of the mathematical proofs of the methods discussed will be avoided for the sake of brevity of exposition. A more detailed mathematical analysis will appear elsewhere.

### II. SOME MATHEMATICAL PRELIMINARIES

A code having  $n$  binary digits may be considered the element of a space, consisting of  $2^n$  elements of the form

$$f = (f_0, \dots, f_{n-1})$$

where

$$(f_j = 0, 1) \text{ for } (j = 0, 1, 2, \dots, n-1)$$

This space is technically an Abelian group if the sum of any two elements  $f$  and  $g$  in the space is defined as follows:

$$f \oplus g = (f_0, f_1, \dots, f_{n-1}) \oplus (g_0, g_1, \dots, g_{n-1}) = (f_0 \oplus g_0, f_1 \oplus g_1, \dots, f_{n-1} \oplus g_{n-1})$$

where  $f_j \oplus g_j$  is the sum modulo two of the binary digits  $f_j$  and  $g_j$  for  $(j = 0, 1, 2, \dots, n-1)$ . If multiplication by the binary scalar  $a$  is allowed as

$$af = a(f_0, f_1, \dots, f_{n-1}) = (af_0, af_1, \dots, af_{n-1})$$

the Abelian group may be termed a generalized vector space of  $n$ -dimensions or a module.

Finally, if the inner product operation

$$f \cdot g = (f_0, f_1, \dots, f_{n-1}) \cdot (g_0, g_1, \dots, g_{n-1}) = (f_0g_0, f_1g_1, \dots, f_{n-1}g_{n-1})$$

for  $f$  and  $g$  in the module is introduced, the space is a Boolean ring. The prime operation is defined to be

$$f' = f \oplus I$$

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for  $f$  in the ring, and where  $I$  is the identity vector  $(1, 1, 1, \dots, 1)$ .

Into this space one may further introduce a norm or length of a vector as follows:

$$\|f\| = \sum_{i=1}^n f_i$$

where  $\Sigma$  refers to ordinary addition. It is not difficult to see that the norm of the sum of two elements  $f$  and  $g$  in the ring or  $\|f \oplus g\|$  is precisely the Hamming distance  $D(f, g)$  as defined in Ref. 1.

Now let  $n$  the dimension of the vector space be a power of two or  $n = 2^m$ . Let a vector of this space be of the form

$$f = (f_0, f_1, \dots, f_{2^m-1})$$

where  $f_j$  is a binary digit for  $(j = 0, 1, \dots, 2^m-1)$ . Now the vector  $f$  may be clearly expressed as

$$f = f_0 I_0 \oplus f_1 I_1 \oplus \dots \oplus f_{2^m-1} I_{2^m-1} \quad (1)$$

where  $I_j$  is a unit vector with the digit one in  $j$ -th coordinate of the vector and zeros elsewhere for  $(j = 0, 1, \dots, 2^m-1)$ . Further, each unit vector  $I_j$  can be determined as a product of  $m$  vectors from the set of  $2m$  vectors  $x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_m, x'_1, x'_2, x'_3, \dots, x'_m$ , where  $x_1$  is a vector consisting of alternating zeros and ones, beginning with zero;  $x_2$  is a vector consisting of alternating zero pairs and one pairs, beginning with a zero pair, and so forth, as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} x_1 &= (0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ \dots \ 0 \ 1) \\ x_2 &= (0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ \dots \ 1 \ 1) \\ x_3 &= (0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ \dots \ 1 \ 1) \\ &\vdots \\ x_m &= (0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ \dots \ 1 \ 1) \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

If  $x_k^{ij}$  is defined to be  $x_k^i$  for  $i_k = 0$  and  $x_k^j$  for  $i_k = 1$ , then by the rules of Boolean algebra,

$$I_j = x_1^{i_1} x_2^{i_2} \dots x_m^{i_m} \quad (3)$$

where

$$j = \sum_{k=1}^m i_k 2^{k-1} \text{ with } (i_k = 0, 1) \text{ for } (j = 0, 1, \dots, m-1)$$

Combining Eqs. (1) and (3), we have

$$f = \sum_{j=0}^{2^m-1} f_j x_1^{i_1} x_2^{i_2} \dots x_m^{i_m} \quad (4)$$

where  $i_1, i_2, \dots, i_m$  are the digits of the binary representation of  $j$ , and where the summation

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sign  $\oplus$  is with respect to the sum operation  $\oplus$ . Equation (4) is the canonical expansion of any vector  $f$  in the Boolean algebra of  $2^m$  dimensional vectors, consisting of binary digits.

If the identity  $x_j^2 = 1 \oplus x_j$  and the distributive law of the algebra is used, Eq. (4) may be expanded to obtain the following polynomial in the  $x_j$ 's:

$$f = g_0 \oplus g_1 x_1 \oplus \dots \oplus g_m x_m \oplus g_{12} x_1 x_2 \oplus \dots \oplus g_{m-1, m} x_{m-1} x_m \oplus \dots \oplus g_{12\dots m} x_1 x_2 \dots x_m \quad (5)$$

Equation (5) can be written more explicitly as

$$f = f(0, \dots, 0) \oplus \Delta_1 f(0, \dots, 0) x_1 \oplus \dots \oplus \Delta_m f(0, \dots, 0) x_m \oplus \Delta_{12}^2 f(0, \dots, 0) x_1 x_2 \oplus \dots \oplus \Delta_{12\dots m}^m f(0, \dots, 0) x_1 x_2 \dots x_m, \quad (6)$$

where

$$f(i_1, \dots, i_m) = f_j \text{ when } j = \sum_{k=1}^m i_k 2^{k-1} \text{ for } i_k = 0, 1,$$

and the  $\Delta$ 's are multiple partial differences, for example,

$$\Delta_1 f(0) = f(1, 0, 0, \dots) \oplus f(0, 0, 0, \dots, 0),$$

$$\Delta_{12}^2 f(0) = [f(1, 1, 0, \dots) \oplus f(0, 1, 0, \dots)] \oplus [f(1, 0, 0, \dots) \oplus f(0, 0, 0, \dots)],$$

and so forth. The polynomial representation in Eq. (6) of the vector  $f$  supplies the relations between the coefficients of Eq. (5) and the scalars  $f_j$  of Eq. (4) for  $(j = 0, 1, 2, \dots, 2^m - 1)$ . This definition of the  $\Delta$ 's will be expanded in Sec. V.

### III. THE GENERATION OF THE MULTIPLE ERROR ALLOWING CODES

Suppose that the dimension of the space considered in Sec. II is  $2^m$ . Consider the set  $\Phi_r^m$  of all polynomials of the form (5) of degree less than or equal to  $r$  where  $r \leq m$ . Each such polynomial must have the form

$$g_0 \oplus g_1 x_1 \oplus \dots \oplus g_m x_m \oplus \dots \oplus g_{12\dots r} x_1 \dots x_r \oplus \dots \oplus g_{m-r, m-r+1, \dots, m} x_{m-r} x_{m-r+1} \dots x_m, \quad (7)$$

and the sum of any two such polynomials is a member of the same set. This implies that  $\Phi_r^m$  the set of all polynomials of type (7) or of degree less than or equal to  $r$  forms an Abelian group or submodule of the Boolean ring of  $2^m$  dimensional vectors. Since  $\Phi_r^m$  is a module, the Hamming distance between any two elements of  $\Phi_r^m$  is the norm of a third element of  $\Phi_r^m$ . This fact was exploited by D. E. Muller<sup>2</sup> in proving his Theorem 25. Muller's Theorem 25, in our terminology, may be expressed as follows:

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**Theorem A:** – The norms of all non-zero vectors  $f$  of  $\Phi_r^m$  satisfy

$$\|f\| \geq 2^{m-r} \text{ for } (m = 0, 1, 2, \dots) \text{ and } r \leq m.$$

We shall not prove this theorem in this section. It suffices to say that, with respect to our terminology, Muller proved the theorem by an induction on  $m$ , holding  $m - r$  constant, and the properties of the Hamming distance.

By the above theorem there is at least a distance  $2^{m-r}$  between two elements of  $\Phi_r^m$  and, as a consequence, there is an open Hamming sphere of radius  $2^{m-r-1}$  about each element of  $\Phi_r^m$  in  $\Phi_r^m$  (the whole vector space) which does not intersect any other such sphere. This means that it is possible to associate each element of such a sphere with the element defining the sphere or what is the same to associate an element of  $\Phi_r^m$  which is less than a distance  $2^{m-r-1}$  from an element  $f$  of  $\Phi_r^m$  with  $f$ .

In order to illustrate how a message may be coded into an error-detecting code of the type described above, consider the following example: Let  $m = 4$  and  $r = 1$ , by (7) the vectors of  $\Phi_1^4$  are of the form

$$g_0 \oplus g_1 x_1 \oplus g_2 x_2 \oplus g_3 x_3 \oplus g_4 x_4 \quad (8)$$

Let the message consist of the five binary digits  $(g_0, g_1, g_2, g_3, g_4)$ . The code space  $\Phi_1^4$  may be regarded as generated by the four vector  $x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4$  and the identity vector  $I$  which may be written explicitly as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} x_1 &= (0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1) \\ x_2 &= (0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1) \\ x_3 &= (0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1) \\ x_4 &= (0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1) \\ I &= (1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1) \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

The 32 vector codes of  $\Phi_1^4$  can be obtained by scalar multiplication of the vectors of (9) by the message digits  $g_0, g_1, g_2, g_3, g_4$  in accordance with (8). For example, the message  $(0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0)$  has the code vector  $g_1 x_1 \oplus g_2 x_2$  or

$$(0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0)$$

Each of the 32 codes will be a distance of at least eight from each other.

In order to practically generate the above code, one should note that the vector  $x_1$  is the sequence of digits generated by the least significant binary stage  $B_1$  of a binary counter of scale sixteen;  $x_2$  is obtained from the second stage  $B_2$ ;  $x_3$  from the third stage  $B_3$ ; and  $x_4$  from the final stage  $B_4$ , as the counter goes through one period of its operation. If the message  $(g_0, g_1, g_2, g_3, g_4)$  is stored in a binary register with stages  $A_0, A_1, A_2, A_3, A_4$ , then the switching function

$$C = A_0 \oplus A_1 B_1 \oplus A_2 B_2 \oplus A_3 B_3 \oplus A_4 B_4$$

will generate the code sequentially during one period of operation of the binary counter.

If one of the above codes of  $\Phi_1^4$  is corrupted during transmission so that no more than three errors are made, it is evidently possible by the previous discussion of this section to somehow extract the original message from the corrupted received code. The method by which this extraction may be accomplished will be shown by example in the next section and in general in the last section. It should be clear from the above example how the vectors of  $\Phi_r^m$  may be generated for arbitrary  $r$  and  $m$  where  $r \leq m$ .

#### IV. DECODING CORRUPTED CODES OF $\Phi_r^m$ BY A MAJORITY TESTING OF REDUNDANCY RELATIONS

Let us first consider the coding space  $\Phi_1^3$ . By (7), the vector of this space has the form

$$g_0 I \oplus g_1 x_1 \oplus g_2 x_2 \oplus g_3 x_3 \quad (10)$$

The message will consist of the four binary digits  $(g_0, g_1, g_2, g_3)$ , and the generating vectors of the space are

$$\begin{aligned} x_1 &= (0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1) \quad , \\ x_2 &= (0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1) \quad , \\ x_3 &= (0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1) \quad , \\ I &= (1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1) \quad . \end{aligned} \quad (11)$$

By (6) we have the following set of relations for the message digits  $g_j$  in terms of  $f_k$ , the code digits.

$$\begin{aligned} g_0 &= f(0, \dots, 0) = f_0 \quad , & \Delta f(0, \dots) &= f_0 \oplus f_1 \oplus f_2 \oplus f_3 = 0 \quad , \\ g_1 &= \Delta f(0, \dots)_1 = f_0 \oplus f_1 \quad , & \Delta f(0, \dots) &= f_0 \oplus f_1 \oplus f_4 \oplus f_5 = 0 \quad , \\ g_2 &= \Delta f(0, \dots)_2 = f_0 \oplus f_2 \quad , & \Delta f(0, \dots) &= f_0 \oplus f_2 \oplus f_4 \oplus f_6 = 0 \quad , \\ g_3 &= \Delta f(0, \dots)_3 = f_0 \oplus f_4 \quad , & \Delta f(0, \dots) &= \sum_{i=0}^7 f_i = 0 \quad . \end{aligned} \quad (12)$$

By (12) there are four relations which  $g_1$  satisfies,

$$g_1 = f_0 \oplus f_1 = f_2 \oplus f_3 = f_4 \oplus f_5 \oplus f_2 \oplus f_3 \oplus f_4 \oplus f_5 \oplus f_6 \oplus f_7 \quad .$$

By substituting the second and third relations into the fourth relation, we have

$$g_1 = g_1 \oplus g_1 \oplus f_6 \oplus f_7 = 0 \oplus f_6 \oplus f_7 = f_6 \oplus f_7 \quad .$$

Thus we obtain the four independent and disjoint relations for  $g_1$ ,

$$g_1 = f_0 \oplus f_1 = f_2 \oplus f_3 = f_4 \oplus f_5 = f_6 \oplus f_7 \quad .$$

These four relations are disjoint in the sense that no two of the relations have variables in common. In a similar manner, we may obtain four independent and disjoint relations for both  $g_2$  and  $g_3$  so that  $g_1, g_2, g_3$  may be expressed as

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$$g_1 = f_0 \oplus f_1 = f_2 \oplus f_3 = f_4 \oplus f_5 = f_6 \oplus f_7 \quad ,$$

$$g_2 = f_0 \oplus f_2 = f_1 \oplus f_3 = f_4 \oplus f_6 = f_5 \oplus f_7 \quad ,$$

$$g_3 = f_0 \oplus f_4 = f_1 \oplus f_5 = f_2 \oplus f_6 = f_3 \oplus f_7 \quad .$$

Let us now suppose that the received code is the vector  $(f_0, f_1, \dots, f_7)$ . If there were no error in transmission of the code, all of the above relations would hold. If there were one error, three out of four of the relations would hold. If there were two errors, at least two of the  $g_j$ 's would have two out of four incorrect relations. Then  $g_1, g_2, g_3$  may be determined uniquely if one or no error occurred during transmission, and two errors may always be detected by making a majority decision test on the arithmetic sum of the values of the four relations for each  $g_j$  ( $j = 1, 2, 3$ ). In order to state this criterion more explicitly, let the values of the four relations for  $g_j$  be denoted by  $r_{j1}, r_{j2}, r_{j3}, r_{j4}$  for ( $j = 1, 2, 3$ ), and let  $S_j$  be the arithmetic sum of  $r_{j1}, r_{j2}, r_{j3}, r_{j4}$  or

$$S_j = \sum_{i=1}^4 r_{ji} \quad .$$

Then the majority decision test for  $g_j$  is

$$\begin{aligned} g_j &= 0 && \text{if } 0 \leq S_j < 2 \quad , \\ g_j &\text{ is indeterminate} && \text{if } S_j = 2 \quad , \\ g_j &= 1 && \text{if } 2 < S_j \leq 4 \text{ for } (j = 1, 2, 3) \quad . \end{aligned} \quad (13)$$

With the assumption that the received code is no more than two digits in error, the majority test (13) will determine  $g_1, g_2, g_3$  uniquely for only one or no errors, and reject the code as meaningless in the case of two errors. In the case of one error or less,  $g_1, g_2, g_3$  may be assumed now to be determined; it remains to determine  $g_0$ . In order to find  $g_0$ , note that if, as  $g_1, g_2, g_3$  are found, the vectors  $g_1x_1, g_2x_2, g_3x_3$  are added successively to the received vector, by (10) we will end with either the vector  $g_0I$  in the case of no error or with a vector of distance one from  $g_0I$ . Thus to detect  $g_0$  the following majority decision test will suffice:

$$\begin{aligned} g_0 &= 0 \text{ if } \sum_{i=0}^7 m_i < 4 \quad , \\ &= 1 \text{ if } \sum_{i=0}^7 m_i > 4 \quad , \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

where  $m_i$  are the digits of the code after extraction of digits  $g_1, g_2, g_3$  in accordance with the above procedure.

The above method of decoding may be illustrated by the following example: Suppose that the message sent was (1 0 1 1), and that during transmission an error was made in the fifth



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digit of the original code (1 1 0 0 0 0 1 1) so that the received code had the form (1 1 0 0 1 0 1 1). We first test for  $g_1, g_2, g_3$  by (12) and find  $g_1 = 0, g_2 = 1$  and  $g_3 = 1$ . Using (11), we add  $g_1x_1 \oplus g_2x_2 \oplus g_3x_3$  to the code, obtaining

$$\begin{aligned} & 0(0 1 0 1 0 1 0 1) \oplus (0 0 1 1 0 0 1 1) \oplus (0 0 0 0 1 1 1 1) \oplus (1 1 0 0 1 0 1 1) \\ & = (1 1 1 1 0 1 1 1) = (m_0, m_1, m_2, \dots, m_3) \end{aligned}$$

Finally, by (14)

$$g_0 = 1, \text{ since } \sum_{i=0}^7 m_i = 7 > 1.$$

Although  $\Phi_1^3$  is none other than an example of a set of one-error-correcting and two-error-detecting codes of the type described by Hamming in Ref. 1, the method of decoding considered above is different. Our procedure of decoding is advantageous in that it may be generalized in a natural way to include any of the coding spaces  $\Phi_r^m$  of Sec. II. Before we consider this generalization by further examples, let us note a tabular way of representing the redundancy relations (12).

If the digits or variables of each relation are connected by lines for each of the vectors  $x_1, x_2, x_3$  as

$$\begin{aligned} x_1 &= (0 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{1}) \quad , \\ x_2 &= (0 \overbrace{0} \quad 1 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{0} \quad 1 \overbrace{1}) \quad , \\ x_3 &= (0 \overbrace{0} \quad 0 \overbrace{0} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 1 \overbrace{1} \quad 1) \quad , \end{aligned} \tag{15}$$

the relations of (12) become almost self-evident by their simplicity with respect to order and symmetry. This simplicity makes it possible to discover redundancy relations for more general spaces  $\Phi_r^m$  without resorting to an algebraic approach similar to the one used to obtain (12).

As a second example of our decoding procedure, consider the coding space  $\Phi_1^4$  introduced in the latter part of Sec. III. Each vector of this space has the form of (8), where the generating vectors are  $x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4$  and  $I$  of (9). The first-degree redundancy relations may be determined in a manner similar to the above example and represented in a tabular manner similar to (15) as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} x_1 &= (0 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{1}) \quad , \\ x_2 &= (0 \overbrace{0} \quad 1 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{0} \quad 1 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{0} \quad 1 \overbrace{1} \quad 0 \overbrace{0} \quad 1 \overbrace{1}) \quad , \\ x_3 &= (0 \overbrace{0} \quad 0 \overbrace{0} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 1 \overbrace{1} \quad 1 \overbrace{0} \quad 0 \overbrace{0} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 1 \overbrace{1} \quad 1) \quad , \\ x_4 &= (0 \overbrace{0} \quad 0 \overbrace{0} \quad 0 \overbrace{0} \quad 0 \overbrace{0} \quad 0 \overbrace{1} \quad 1 \overbrace{1} \quad 1 \overbrace{1} \quad 1 \overbrace{1} \quad 1 \overbrace{1} \quad 1) \quad . \end{aligned} \tag{16}$$

For instance, the eight independent and joint relations for  $g_1$  are

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$$g_1 = f_{2i} \oplus f_{2i+1} \text{ for } (i = 0, 1, \dots, 7) \quad .$$

If the eight values of the redundancy relations for  $g_j$  are labeled  $r_{j1}, r_{j2}, \dots, r_{j8}$  for  $(j = 1, 2, 3, 4)$ , and  $S_j$  is defined by

$$S_j = \sum_{i=1}^8 r_{ji} \quad ,$$

then, by an argument similar to that used in the previous example, the majority decision test for  $g_j$  is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} g_j &= 0 && \text{if } 0 \leq S_j < 4 \quad , \\ g_j &\text{ is indeterminate} && \text{if } S_j = 2 \quad , \\ g_j &= 1 && \text{if } 4 \leq S_j \leq 8 \text{ for } (j = 1, 2, 3, 4) \quad . \end{aligned} \quad (17)$$

In order to determine  $g_0$ , we first add the determined vectors  $g_j x_j$  to the received message, assuming, of course, that no  $g_j$  is indeterminate, and we are left with the zero-degree polynomial  $\Phi_0^4$ , possibly corrupted by errors. If there had been no errors, there would be sixteen zero-degree relations which  $g_0$  satisfies, or

$$g_0 = m_j \text{ for } (j = 0, 1, 2, \dots, 15) \quad ,$$

where, as in (14),  $m_j$  are the digits of the code after extraction of  $g_1, g_2, g_3$  and  $g_4$ . Thus  $g_0$  is determined by the majority decision test

$$\begin{aligned} g_0 &= 0 \text{ if } \sum_{i=0}^{15} m_i < 8 \quad , \\ &= 1 \text{ if } \sum_{i=0}^{15} m_i > 8 \quad . \end{aligned} \quad (18)$$

For the above example, three errors may be made in code and the correct message obtains. If four errors are made, some of the message digits are indeterminate. It is of some interest to note that, for some cases of five errors in the code, the message may be extracted correctly. For example, suppose that the message was (0 0 0 0 0) and that the received code was (1 1 0 0 1 0 1 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0). Clearly, the correct message will be extracted from this code by the above procedure.

As a final example of coding and decoding scheme, consider  $\Phi_2^4$ . This space is generated by  $x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4$  of (16) and I, as well as the quadratic variables  $x_1 x_2, x_1 x_3, x_1 x_4, x_2 x_3, x_2 x_4, x_3 x_4$ . The latter six vectors may be presented in the following tabular manner:

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$$\begin{aligned}
 x_1 x_2 &= (0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1) \ , \\
 x_1 x_3 &= (0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1) \ , \\
 x_1 x_4 &= (0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1 \ 0 \ 1) \ , \\
 x_2 x_3 &= (0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1) \ , \\
 x_2 x_4 &= (0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1) \ , \\
 x_3 x_4 &= (0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1) \ .
 \end{aligned} \tag{19}$$

The messages for this example will be 11 binary digit numbers of the form  $(g_0, g_1, g_2, g_3, g_4, g_{12}, g_{13}, g_{14}, g_{23}, g_{24}, g_{34})$ . Each code will be sent as a vector of the form

$$\begin{aligned}
 &g_0 \oplus g_1 x_1 \oplus g_2 x_2 \oplus g_3 x_3 \oplus g_4 x_4 \oplus g_{12} x_1 x_2 \oplus g_{13} x_1 x_3 \oplus g_{14} x_1 x_4 \oplus g_{23} x_2 x_3 \\
 &\oplus g_{24} x_2 x_4 \oplus g_{34} x_3 x_4 \ .
 \end{aligned}$$

The second-degree coefficients  $g_{ij}$  of the received message are extracted first with a majority decision based on the redundancy relations illustrated in (19). Next, assuming that no indeterminacy occurred in the second-degree coefficients, the vectors  $g_{ij} x_i x_j$  are added to the received code, after which we are left with a residual code from which the first-degree coefficients  $g_1, g_2, g_3, g_4$  may be extracted by test (17). Finally, the zero-degree coefficient  $g_0$  may be determined by test (18) after adding the vector  $g_1 x_1, g_2 x_2, g_3 x_3, g_4 x_4$  to the residual code.

This example illustrates the general principle of decoding the particular class of codes under consideration. The highest degree coefficients of a received code are extracted first; then these terms of the polynomial are subtracted out of the code, thereby leaving a residual code of the next lower degree than the original code in the special case of no errors. The operation is repeated over and over on the successive residual codes until either an indeterminacy occurs or until  $g_0$  is extracted.

The relations of (19) illustrate the fact that there are four redundancy relations each of four variables for the second-degree coefficients  $g_{ij}$ . For example, the redundancy relations for  $g_{12}$  are

$$g_{12} = f_{4i} \oplus f_{4i+1} \oplus f_{4i+2} \oplus f_{4i+3} \text{ for } (i = 0, 1, 2, 3) \ . \tag{20}$$

In general, these relations will allow only one error; two errors will lead to indeterminacy. This is another example of Hamming's one-error-correction and two-error-detection codes.

It should be noted that the majority decision tests used in the above examples were, in general, overdeterminate. For instance, in the first example, if one error had been made,

no more than one error would remain in the residual code after determining  $g_1, g_2, g_3$ . On the other hand, if two errors had occurred, the process of extraction would have ended before  $g_0$  could be determined. Thus a test of only the following type would be necessary:

$$g_0 = 0 \text{ if } m_{i_1} + m_{i_2} + m_{i_3} \leq 1,$$

$$g_1 = 1 \text{ if } m_{i_1} + m_{i_2} + m_{i_3} \geq 2,$$

where  $i_1, i_2, i_3$  are any three distinct numbers between zero and seven, inclusive. Refinements such as this, however, do not destroy the validity of the previous tests.

## V. THE GENERAL DECODING PRINCIPLE

To study the general decoding scheme, illustrated by example in Sec. IV, it will be necessary to consider the general multinomial expansion formula (6) more carefully. Let us first define the multiple differences, used in (6), in more detail.

As in (6),  $f(i_1, \dots, i_m)$  is defined as

$$f(i_1, \dots, i_m) = f_j \text{ when } j = \sum_{k=1}^m i_k 2^{k-1} \text{ for } (i_k = 0, 1) \quad (21)$$

The general multiple partial difference

$$\Delta_{k_1, k_2, \dots, k_p}^p f(i_1, i_2, \dots, i_m)$$

is defined inductively as

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta_k f(i_1, \dots, i_m) &= f(i_1, \dots, i_{k-1}, i_k \oplus 1, i_{k+1}, \dots, i_m) \oplus f(i_1, \dots, i_k, \dots, i_m) \\ \Delta_{k_1, k_2, \dots, k_p}^p f(i_1, \dots, i_m) &= \Delta_{k_1, \dots, k_{p-1}}^{p-1} f(i_1, \dots, i_{k_{p-1}}, i_{k_p} \oplus 1, i_{k_{p+1}}, \dots, i_m) \\ &\quad + \Delta_{k_1, \dots, k_{p-1}}^{p-1} f(i_1, \dots, i_m) \quad (22) \end{aligned}$$

With these definitions it is possible to prove by induction the validity and uniqueness of expansion (6) for any Boolean algebra of  $m$  variables and, in particular, for the Boolean algebra of  $2^m$  dimensional vectors as described in Sec. II.

One evident consequence of (21) is the identity

$$f(i_1, \dots, i_{k-1}, i_k \oplus 1, i_{k+1}, \dots, i_m) = f_{i+(-1)^{i_k} 2^{k-1}} \quad (23)$$

By the use of (23) it is possible to write (22) explicitly in terms of the  $f_i$  as

# UNCLASSIFIED

$$\Delta_k f(i_1, \dots, i_m) = f_i \oplus f_{i+(-1) i_k 2^{k-1}}$$

and

$$\Delta_{k_1, k_2, \dots, k_p} f(i_1, \dots, i_m) = \sum_{i=1}^{2^{p-1}} f_{j_i} \oplus \sum_{i=1}^{2^{p-1}} f_{j_i+(-1) i_{k_p} 2^{p-1}}$$

where

$$\Delta_{k_1, k_2, \dots, k_{p-1}} f(i_1, \dots, i_m) = \sum_{i=1}^{2^{p-1}} f_{j_i} \quad \text{and} \quad j_i \neq j_s + (-1) i_{k_p} 2^{p-1} \quad \text{for } (i, s = 1, \dots, 2^{p-1}) \quad (24)$$

We are now in a position to prove the following fundamental theorem on which the general decoding principle of the class of codes under consideration rests.

**Theorem B:** – Each highest or  $r$ -th degree coefficient of any vector or polynomial  $f$  of  $\Phi_r^m$  satisfies exactly  $2^{m-r}$  disjoint relations where each relation has precisely the form

$$\sum_{k=1}^{2^r} f_{i_k} = 0,$$

where  $i_k$  are distinct numbers from the set  $(0, 1, 2, \dots, 2^m - 1)$  for  $(k = 1, 2, \dots, 2^r)$ . Disjointness of relations means that no two relations have variables  $i_i$  in common.

**Proof:** – Choose  $m$  and  $r$ . By (6), (7) and (24), the highest degree coefficients for an  $f$  of  $\Phi_r^m$  are

$$g_{k_1 \dots k_r} = \Delta_{k_1 k_2 \dots k_r} f(0, \dots, 0) = \sum_{i=1}^{2^r} f_{j_i} \quad (25)$$

where  $k_j$  are distinct integers from the set  $(1, 2, \dots, m)$  for  $(j = 1, \dots, r)$ , and  $j_i$  are distinct integers from the set  $(0, 1, \dots, 2^m - 1)$  for  $(i = 1, 2, \dots, 2^r)$ . Moreover,

$$\Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r n_1 n_2 \dots n_t} f(0, \dots, 0) = 0 \quad (26)$$

for  $t \geq 1$ , and  $k_j$  and  $n_i$  are distinct integers from the set  $(1, 2, \dots, m)$  for  $(j = 1, \dots, t)$ .

Let  $k_1, k_2, \dots, k_r$  be a distinct set of integers from the set  $(1, 2, \dots, m)$ . Then, by (26) and (22),

$$\Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r n_1} f(0, \dots, 0) = \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r} f(0, \dots, 0) \oplus \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r} f(0, \dots, 1, \dots, 0) = 0 \quad (27)$$

where  $n_1$  is any one of the  $m - r$  integers from the set  $(1, 2, \dots, m)$  which is distinct from the integers  $(k_1, k_2, \dots, k_r)$ . Thus, by (24) and (25), we have exhibited  $m - r$  new relations of the

# UNCLASSIFIED

form required by the theorem. Each of these new relations is distinguished by the fact that the digit one appears only in the  $n_1$ -th position of the function  $f(i_1, \dots, i_m)$  operated on by

$$\Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r}^r .$$

Now define  $f[n_1, n_2, \dots, n_t]$  to be  $f(i_1, i_2, \dots, i_m)$  with  $i_k = 1$  for  $k = n_1, n_2, \dots, n_t$  and  $i_k = 0$  otherwise. The theorem will be proved by induction on the subscript of  $n$ . Assume therefore that

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta_{k_1 k_2 \dots k_r n_1 n_2 \dots n_{s-1}}^{r+s-1} f(0, 0, \dots, 0) &= \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r}^r f(0, 0, \dots, 0) \\ &\oplus \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r}^r f[n_1, n_2, \dots, n_{s-1}] . \end{aligned} \quad (28)$$

Now, by (22) and (26) and the induction hypothesis (28),

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r n_1 \dots n_s}^{r+s} f(0, 0, \dots, 0) &= \Delta_{n_s}^{r+s-1} \left( \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r n_1 \dots n_{s-1}}^{r+s-1} f(0, 0, \dots, 0) \right) , \\ &= \Delta_{n_s}^{r+s-1} \left( \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r}^r f(0, \dots, 0) \oplus \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r}^r f[n_1, \dots, n_{s-1}] \right) , \\ &= \Delta_{k_1, \dots, k_r}^r f(0, 0, \dots, 0) \oplus \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r}^r f[n_1, \dots, n_{s-1}] , \\ &\oplus \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r}^r f[n_s] \oplus \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r}^r f[n_1, \dots, n_s] = 0 . \end{aligned}$$

Now, by (27) and (28), the two middle terms are equal to

$$\Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r}^r f(0, 0, \dots, 0) ,$$

and therefore their sum modulo 2 is zero. Hence

$$\Delta_{k_1 \dots n_s}^{r+s} f(0, \dots, 0) = \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r}^r f(0, \dots, 0) \oplus \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r}^r f[n_1, \dots, n_s] = 0 ,$$

and the induction is complete. The theorem is proved when we observe that the relation

$\Delta_{k_1 \dots k_s}^{r+s} f(0, \dots, 0) = 0$  contributes  $\binom{m-r}{s}$  distinct relations

$$\Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r} f(0, \dots, 0) = \Delta_{k_1 \dots k_r} f[n_1, n_2, \dots, n_s] \quad ,$$

since there are  $\binom{m-r}{s}$  ways of choosing  $s$  integers from  $m-r$  integers. Using all the relations (26) for the particular set  $k_1 \dots k_r$  and  $t = 1$  to  $t = m-r$  and the relation (25), we get

$$1 + \sum_{t=1}^{m-r} \binom{m-r}{t} = 2^{m-r}$$

distinct relations for  $g_{k_1, k_2, \dots, k_r}$ . Since these relations exhaust all variables  $f_{i_k}$ , the

theorem is proved.

The above theorem shows that the generalization of the decoding principle, discussed in the last section, obtains. The majority decision test for the general case can clearly be used to extract the  $r$ -th degree coefficients of  $I_r^m$ , where the relations used for the test are the  $2^{m-r}$  relations of Theorem B. The  $(r-1)$ -th degree coefficients are then extracted the same way after the determined  $r$ -th order terms have been subtracted or added into the received code. This process is continued for the  $r-2, r-3, \dots$  degree coefficients until the message is extracted or an indeterminacy is reached.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

There are two or three generalizations of the codes and the methods of decoding. In Ref. 2, Muller discusses a possible set of codes other than binary length of  $2^m$ . Another generalization obtains where the polynomials are considered over a field other than characteristic two; i.e., ternary codes, etc. Lastly, it appears from some work of T. A. Kalin that an error-correction scheme of the type considered by Hamming may generalize to the coding space  $\Phi_r^m$  in a rather natural way.

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